

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 102254
ORIGIN PM-05

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 INR-10 OES-07 IO-13 CIAE-00
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BONN NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 102254

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: TSPA, GW

SUBJECT:FRG INQUIRY ON SOVIET SATELLITE

REF: BONN 7491

1. FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF MESSAGE SENT TO EMBASSY ROME ON
MARCH 22 IN RESPONSE TO SIMILAR INQUIRY:

BEGIN TEXT:

YOU MAY INFORM THE MFA THAT SATELLITE MENTIONED IN REFTTEL
(COSMOS-849), UNLIKE COSMOS-954 WHICH DISINTEGRATED OVER
CANADA, DOES NOT REPEAT NOT HAVE A NUCLEAR REACTOR ON
BOARD. COSMOS-849, ALSO KNOWN AS 1976-083A, CURRENTLY IS
EXPECTED TO RE-ENTER THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE SOMETIME IN
MAY OF THIS YEAR. THE DATE OF RE-ENTRY IS NOT PREDICTABLE
WITH ANY BETTER ACCURACY AT THIS TIME BECAUSE OF LARGE
VARIATION IN ATMOSPHERIC DENSITY AND OTHER FACTORS.

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PAGE 02 STATE 102254

LOCATION OF RE-ENTRY COULD BE ANYWHERE BETWEEN LATITUDES
71 DEGREES NORTH AND 71 DEGREES SOUTH.

COSMOS DESIGNATION SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED TO MEAN THAT
A SOVIET SATELLITE SO DESIGNATED HAS AN ON-BOARD NUCLEAR
POWERPLANT. USSR HAS APPLIED COSMOS DESIGNATION TO ABOUT
995 SATELLITES, WITH A WIDE VARIETY OF CIVIL AND MILITARY

APPLICATIONS, OF SOME 1,050 IT HAS LAUNCHED SINCE 1957.
ONLY A FEW HAVE HAD ON-BOARD NUCLEAR REACTORS.

IN A MORE GENERAL VEIN, ITALIANS ALREADY SHOULD BE
AWARE THAT THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF MAN-MADE OBJECTS IN
EARTH ORBIT, ALL SUBJECT TO RE-ENTRY AT SOME TIME. RE-
ENTRY OF THESE OBJECTS OCCURS MANY TIMES A YEAR ON AN AL-
MOST REGULAR BASIS. THE MAJORITY BURN UP COMPLETELY DURING
RE-ENTRY, BUT A FEW OBJECTS OR FRAGMENTS SURVIVE RE-ENTRY
AND IMPACT ON THE EARTH'S SURFACE. IN SUCH AN EVENTU-
ALITY, POTENTIAL DAMAGES WOULD BE COVERED BY VARIOUS
INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, INCLUDING THE 1967 OUTER SPACE
TREATY AND THE 1972 CONVENTION ON INTERNATIONAL LIA-
BILITY FOR DAMAGE CAUSED BY SPACE OBJECTS. INsofar AS
A SOVIET LAUNCHED SPACE OBJECT MIGHT BE THE INSTRUMENT
OF DAMAGE, THE USSR HAS SIGNED AND RATIFIED BOTH OF THESE
AGREEMENTS. END TEXT.

2. BEST PREDICTION AT THIS TIME IS THAT COSMOS-849
WILL RE-ENTER AT 232215Z SUNDAY APRIL 23 AT 48 DEGREES
NORTH, 170 DEGREES WEST. HOWEVER, THIS ESTIMATED TIME
OF RE-ENTRY COULD BE OFF BY AS MUCH AS 20 HOURS EITHER
WAY, PRODUCING A WIDE VARIATION IN POSSIBLE GEOGRAPHICAL
POINTS OF RE-ENTRY. CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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